

James Carol is the creator of the eccentric genius Jefferson Winter, a former FBI profiler who travels the world hunting serial criminals.



I've always loved antiheroes. They're so much more interesting than your plain-vanilla brand of hero. Let's face it, if you had the choice between being the Artful Dodger or Oliver Twist, you're going to be the Artful Dodger every time. I mean, who the hell wants to be Oliver?

Antiheroes appeal to writers because you have so much freedom. These are characters who don't conform to the norms of society, characters who play hard and fast with the rules. And who doesn't want to take a little walk on the wild side from time to time? You can have a despicable character doing despicable things, yet you're totally on their side, cheering them on from the touchline. Hannibal Lecter is a great example. The guy eats people for Christ's sake.

One of the greatest antiheroes of all time has got to be the Godfather. The way that Mario Puzo flipped reality so the villain became the hero is genius. I love the book, love the film, most of all I love the vicarious thrill that you get from rooting for a character who, when all's said and done, is doing some pretty nasty things. Arranging to have a horse's head left in someone's bed, well, it's not exactly nice, is it?

So what separates the antihero from the bad guy? At the top of the list is the fact that they do have a moral compass of sorts. This compass may be skewed, but they're still following it. Look at Dexter. The guy's a serial killer, but it's okay because he only murders people who deserve it.

Then there's the fact that there is generally something in their character that makes them human, something that speaks to our own humanity. It could be a flaw, or it could be an appreciation for fine food, Chianti, and the works of Bach. Tony Soprano could have just been another gangster, but he's not. Here's a guy who's dealing with the sort of problems we all have to deal with. Relationship troubles, teenage kids, and to top it all he's seeing a shrink.

Jefferson Winter was always going to be an antihero. I'd made a couple of stabs at this in the past, but never come up with anything that felt real enough to me. There was always a sense that I was trying too hard. Of course, when I stopped trying, things finally fell into place.

One night I was having trouble sleeping and, for whatever reason, I found myself in the viewing room at an execution. Straightaway I wanted to know who was being executed. Next I wanted to know what my connection to the condemned man was. The idea that I might be the son of a serial killer intrigued me enough to make me get out of bed and hit the keyboard.

After that the pieces kept falling into place. It turns out that the guy in the viewing room was an ex-FBI profiler who now travels the world hunting serial criminals. He's got a genius-level IQ and a taste for single malt whiskey. His favourite composer is Mozart, but he has a thing for rock music.

Underpinning all of this is his relationship with his father, and the idea that they may be more alike than Winter cares to admit. Winter has never murdered anybody, but he is a textbook psychopath, and the reason he's good at catching these monsters is because he's able to think like them. Is this an innate ability or is it something he learned? How much is down to nature and how much to nurture?

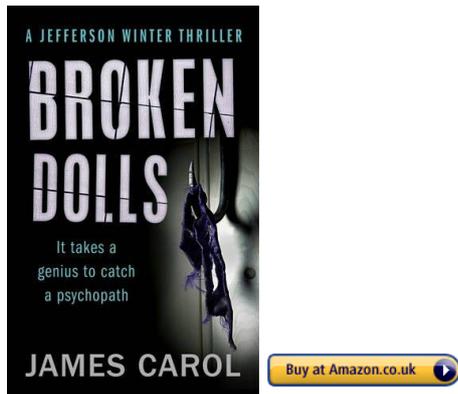
Developing the character wasn't a quick process. It would be another eight months before I was satisfied, and even now I'm still discovering new things about Winter. One of the last pieces in the puzzle was the name. That involved numerous emails flying between my agent and myself. Long story short: I came up with Jefferson and she came up with Winter and that was that. He is Jefferson Winter, for now and evermore. The name fits like a glove.

Leon, Dirty Harry, Jack Reacher, Sherlock Holmes, the list goes on. And the really cool thing is that this list is being added to all the time. Will Jefferson

Winter get a place? I like to think so. Would Jefferson Winter care if he got on that list? Not a chance. He's much too busy hunting monsters to worry about that sort of thing.

Broken Dolls by James Carol paperback, £7.99 published 17th Jan 2014 by Faber & Faber

An excerpt from *Broken Dolls* can be read [here](#).



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